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COMX 485.B01: Social Interaction and Human Well-Being

Stephen M. Yoshimura

University of Montana, Missoula, stephen.yoshimura@umontana.edu

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COMX 485: Social Interaction and Human Well-Being

Fall 2021

CRN 74778

MW 8:30-9:50 (In-class meetings on Wednesday only)

Instructor: Steve Yoshimura, Ph.D.

Office: LA 347

Office Phone: (406) 243-4951

Email: Stephen.yoshimura@umontana.edu

Office Hours: videoconference by appointment

Social relationships are a cornerstone of human health. For one, they help us accomplish our basic goals in life by providing us with all kinds of social support. However, they also provide us with important opportunities to exchange positive emotional experiences, in the form of love, affection, gratitude, humor and forgiveness. Research indicates that opportunities to communicate these experiences provide us with both objective and subjective health outcomes. The purpose of this course is to help you discover how human communication and interpersonal relationships intersect to affect our physical and psychological well-being. More broadly, this class is about how communication can make our lives happier, healthier, and more satisfying lives.

In this class, you will learn how to:

- Recognize and explain the main theoretical reasons why and how health relates to human interaction and relationships across the lifespan.
- Explain how specific types of communicative behaviors (disclosure, affection, gratitude expressions, etc.) relate to health and well-being outcomes.
- Interpret and synthesize research findings that help explain your own experiences of communication and well-being.

This course fulfills an elective requirement for the Global Public Health Minor. Please contact me if you would like more information about either of those opportunities.

Required Readings

Weekly readings, and a weekly schedule of those readings are available on the Moodle online course supplement, in the "syllabus" section.

Vaillant, G. E. (2002). *Aging well: Surprising guideposts to a happier life from the landmark Harvard Study of Adult Development*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown, & Co.

How the class will run

The lecture content for this class is on video (see the Moodle course shell). I advise doing the readings and watching the lecture content on Mondays. Each week, we will meet as a class on *Wednesdays at 8:30am-9:50am in LA 207*. During that time, we will discuss the readings for the week, and I will explain concepts and give examples, facilitate a discussion, answer questions, and administer exams.

Assignments*

The assignments for this class are divided into two categories: Focus assignments and an integrative assignment. The focus assignments are designed to enhance your understanding about a specific topic in the course, whereas the integrative assignment is designed to help you assemble your knowledge about communication and health into one experience.

Assignments (2 required at 100 points each)

Detailed assignment instructions are available online, on the Moodle course supplement.

The assignments for the course are designed to help you experience an emotional/relational state, and then analyze the experience in terms of the concepts and theories you will learn about in class.

Each assignment has three components: Planning, doing, and writing. This means that each assignment involves an activity that needs to be planned and accomplished **PRIOR** to writing the report. The course calendar includes recommendations of when you should start the activities and when the assignment is due, so be sure to leave yourself time between the doing and the writing components of each assignment.

The assignments will be assessed as if they are demonstrations of your learning. Your ability to discuss your experiences using terms, concepts, research findings, and theories you have learned about in this class is key to doing well on the assignments. I have placed a * in each section of the assignment that will be evaluated for your understanding of course concepts. Treat these sections like an “exam.”

All assignments should be submitted to the course Moodle page. Below is an itemized list of the assignments. **Choose any two** from the following list:

- Ask for help (Submit on Monday 9/27)
- Gratitude letter/gratitude expression reflection (Submit on Monday 10/11)
- Communicating and the Experiencing Nostalgia (Submit on Monday 10/18)
- Creating closeness and connection in relationships (Submit on Monday 11/8)
- Elder interview and aging well report (Submit on Monday 11/22)

All assignments will be assessed on the following criteria:

- Completeness – Directions were followed, ideas were fully described and explained, claims fully supported with academic evidence, and points completely made.
- Scholarly understanding – experiences are fully analyzed with accurate use of terminology and concepts learned in the class and readings.
- Mechanics – grammar, spelling, punctuation, and format norms adhered to.

Presentation

Due: Monday 12/6, 8:30am

50 points possible

At the end of the semester, you'll briefly present one of your assignments to the class. You can either record a video, design a poster, or do your presentation live. Either way, your presentation should be about 5-10 minutes (depending on how many people are in the class) and have the following components:

Introduction

Grab the audience's attention with an informative, but gripping piece of information about your experience (either your last week in Missoula, or your gratitude project).

Discussion

Tell us the story of your project. What kinds of things did you experience? For the time that you were engaged in the process, and for the weeks after, what, if anything did you notice about your health and well-being? Visual aids (photos, mood charts, etc.) will be included in the best presentations.

Integrate research findings about your experience. According to research you have read in this class, why did you experience the emotions and feelings you did?* (will be assessed for course content understanding, as in an exam)

Conclusion

Close your presentation with a memorable, take-home message about the main lesson you learned from your project. What did you learn in this class, and what do you think is the most important lesson you could pass along to your classmates?

Poster format: See poster template on Moodle.

Video format: Use any video recording software to record you talking over slides and other media.

Live format: Use .ppt or other presentation software to add media to your live presentation.

Exams: Three at 50 points each

Exams will be in-person multiple-choice and short-answer exams.

Study guides will be provided within a week of each exam.

In the event that the class, the instructor, or an individual student is unable to meet for the exam, the format may be changed to a written or oral exam format (using Zoom) in place of the in-person modality.

Graduate-Level Increment (For graduate students only).

To take this course for graduate credit, students must accomplish one additional, graduate-level assignment. The details of the assignment can be negotiated on a case-by-case basis, but here are few ideas to get you started. One option is to develop and teach a unit/topic in the course (to be evaluated as a teaching unit). This could involve recording a video or hosting a Zoom discussion, developing readings to go along with the unit, and perhaps integrating an activity. A second option could be to write a literature review on a topic related to one of the course topics. The teaching unit should have the basic components of effective teaching (to be discussed and developed in consultation with Prof. Yoshimura). The literature review can take one of two forms. Either it will be a "state-of-the-art" review, in which a body of literature on one of the course topics is comprehensively reviewed with the goal of providing an up-to-date overview of the current state of knowledge about the topic, or a "literature insights" review, in which the literature in a particular class-related area is reviewed with the goal of addressing or answering an empirical question about one of the course topics. Both options should culminate with a proposed

research agenda aimed at highlighting what the most useful directions of future research on the chosen topic should be. A third option could be to do two mock manuscript reviews, acting as “Reviewer D” for manuscripts submitted for publication. In this case, you would analyze an actual manuscript submitted for publication and write a review as if you were an actual reviewer. You would point out what the researchers did well, but specifically highlight the parts of the manuscript that would need to be developed in order for it to be published, or explain what the main issues are that lead you to decide that the manuscript should be rejected. If you like the latter option, I will provide you with further guidance on how to review manuscripts for publication.

Course Policies and Expectations

1. COVID-19

Vaccination is expected. Get it for free at the Curry Health Center, all grocery stores and pharmacies in town, the community vaccination site at Southgate Mall, and your physician’s office. Masks are required in all campus classrooms, to be worn over your mouth and nose. If moving to Zoom becomes necessary, then a Zoom link will be made available on the course Moodle page. The class will then meet at the same time each week, and assignment dates will remain the same. If the class or individual students are unable to meet for in-person exams, a videoconference oral exam or written essay format will be substituted for the in-person multiple-choice version.

If you are required to isolate and/or go into quarantine, please use your university email account to immediately email me. We can discuss reasonable ways to support your continued academic progress.

Do not attend class if you feel like you might be sick, and/or know that you have been exposed to someone with Covid. Instead, please call the Curry Health Center at 406-243-4330 for a free and fast Covid test if you have not already done so. Certainly do not attend if you are uncontrollably coughing or sneezing for whatever reason. Coughing or sneezing are conditions under which I might stop a class session and instruct you to leave the classroom for everyone’s safety.

If the instructor falls ill and is required to isolate/go into quarantine, this class will move to an entirely online format. Exam modalities will change to written or oral formats using videoconference.

2. Attending class meetings

Attendance is expected, illness notwithstanding. See #1, above. Attendance will be taken each time we meet.

Use of electronic devices in class for reasons unrelated to the course is prohibited.

3. Late Work

Assignments become late when they are turned in after their due time and date. Late assignments will receive a **20% penalty for each day** that it is late. After five days, assignments may not be graded.

4. Written Work

All papers must be double-spaced in entirety (no double-double spaces please), using 12-point Times-New-Roman font, with 1-inch margins all around, and in the appropriate format (APA). Do not increase font size, margin size, or line spacing as a way of trying to make a paper look more complete. Doing so will have the opposite effect.

5. Academic Misconduct

According to the University of Montana Catalog, “Plagiarism is the representing of another’s work as one’s own. It is a particularly intolerable offense in the academic community and is strictly forbidden. Students who plagiarize may fail the course and may be remanded to Academic Court for possible suspension or expulsion... Students must always be very careful to acknowledge any kind of borrowing that is included in their work. This means not only borrowed wording, but also ideas. Acknowledgement of whatever is not one’s own original work is the proper and honest use of sources. Failure to acknowledge whatever is not one’s own original work is plagiarism.” I want to add to that it also is not appropriate to submit papers written by yourself for previous or other courses.

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the student conduct code. Please see the [Student Conduct Code](#) for definitions and consequences of cheating and plagiarism.

6. Incompletes

See the *University of Montana Catalog* for more information. These are very rarely granted, and only under the most unique circumstances.

7. Credit/No Credit grade option

According to the University Catalog, the Credit/No Credit grade option exists “to encourage students to venture into courses where they might otherwise hesitate because of uncertainty regarding their aptitude or preparation....” It does not exist as protection from poor performance after the 45th day of the semester. If you desire the credit/no credit grade option, you must indicate this decision to me within the first 45 days of the semester. I will not grant any grade-option changes past that time. *If you wish to apply this course to your major, minor, or general education requirements, you must take it for a traditional letter grade.*

8. Unique Needs

Everyone will have a fair chance at doing well in this class. If you have unique needs that help you overcome some challenge to your learning, please see Disability Services for Students (DSS) in the Lommasson Center (Room 144; phone: 243-2243). They will help you determine what types of resources are available to help you and will provide you with a letter to me detailing those resources. We will work together to make sure that you begin with a “level playing field” for your performance in this course.

9. If you participate in University-sponsored activities (e.g., sports, debate, etc.) AND you will be missing assignment due dates or exams for related activities

I need a letter from your coach documenting your participation, as well as copy of your schedule indicating which days of class you’ll need to miss due to your activity. You are responsible for getting notes and making arrangements to turn in your assignments/take exams.

10. Help on campus

Life, relationships, and college are complicated experiences even without a global pandemic happening. Yet, these are meaningful pursuits even while they are challenging. Please know that we have excellent professional resources on campus to help you manage a variety of issues that you might encounter. If you need assistance identifying a resource that could help you, please contact me at any time at stephen.yoshimura@umontana.edu.

Course Calendar

*Calendar is subject to change

WK 1

Topic: Health and Well-being: Why is Social Interaction Important to Human Health?

WK 2

Topic: Key terms and concepts for understanding research on health and communication

WK 3

Topics: An overview of the health benefits of social relationships; Overview of The Harvard Study of Adult Development

WK 4

Topic: Social support, comforting, and advice-giving

For the “Ask for Help” assignment, ask for support this week.

WK 5

Topic: Expressing gratitude Compassion, and kindness

Due: Ask for help assignment

WK 6

Topic: Nostalgia

For the gratitude assignment, write and read your letter this week.

WK 7

Topic: Humor

For the Nostalgia assignment, have your nostalgic experience this week.

Due: Communicating Gratitude – analysis paper (attach the letter too)

WK 8

Topic: Affectionate communication

Due: Nostalgia assignment

WK 9

Topic: Self-Disclosure

WK 10

Topic: The Role of Space and Design in Well-Being

For the Creating Closeness Assignment, do the closeness generating activity this week.

WK 11

Topic: Emotional experience and expressions

Due: Creating Closeness in Relationships paper

WK 12

Topic: Aging well

If you are doing the “Elder Interview” assignment, arrange and do your interview this week.

WK 13

Topic: Love and attachment

Due: Elder interview paper

WK 14

Topic: Forgiveness

Reminder: Prepare your presentation for next week

WK 15

Topic: Public Policy and Social Well-being (and/or presentations this week, depending on circumstances)

Week 16 – Final exam time: Monday, 12/13, 8-10am